BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN IN KASHMIR

Jagan Nath Sathu

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THE IRON CURTAIN

For more than four years the State of Jammu and Kashmir has gone behind a sort of iron curtain from where little authentic information is allowed to leak out. All that is being published about the conditions prevailing in that country, particularly in the Indian Press, is nothing but inspired or invented stories, which are far removed from facts about the freedom, progress and prosperity of the people under the "democratic" regime of the Kashmir Nationalists. Every effort is being made to suppress the truth and keep the outside world utterly ignorant and misinformed about the reality. It is little surprising that the public opinion in India has lost all touch with the political situation in Kashmir as it exists in fact.

Two factors are responsible for the creation of this iron curtain. First, the despotic and authoritarian method of rule by the Nationalists which does not brook any independence, much less opposition. All freedom of Press has been ruthlessly wiped out. No political party, excepting the National Conference, is allowed to function freely. If there is even the least suspicion about the political views of any individual he is harassed in hundred and one ways.

But this persecution by the Nationalists, brutal and inhuman though it is, could not continue for long if Indian politicians and journalists did not connive

at it and even encourage it by refusing to publish any news or reports that are critical of the Nationalists' doings and expose the real conditions in the State, particularly in the valley. This is the second factor which has strengthened the Iron Curtain originally built by the Nationalists. Journalists of almost all shades of opinion in India have irrevocably decided to support the Abdullah Government whether right or wrong. They consider it as their patriotic duty to shield the Kashmir Nationalists against any exposure. While doing so they might and do damage the vital interests of the millions ot people living in the State in different ways ; some of them are suppressing the truth deliberately and consciously which is the vilest sin a journalist can commit. But to them that does not matter. So far as the Kashmir dispute is concerned, an Indian journalist thinks that so long as he supports the Abdullah Government he has done his duty and done it well. He does not have any qualms ot conscience or any scruples about what he does.

This small booklet is written with the intention of telling the outsiders how the things are behind the Iron Curtain so that the world conscience is stirred and the State's people might be able to secure justice. The author has tried his best to be objective and dispassionate so far as is humanly possible to do so under the circumstances. With that end in view he has verified all the facts mentioned and left out hundreds of harrowing stories about which there was even a shadow of doubt.

CHAPTER I

KASHMIR AND ITS PEOPLE

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is spread over an area of 84,000 sqr. miles and, according to the census report of 1941, its population is just over four million. The State is divided into three main regions, the Jammu Province including Poonch, the Kashmir Province including the district of Muzaffarabad and the Frontier illaqas comprising of the districts of Gilgit and Ladakh. Of these the Frontier region is sparsely populated.

People of diverse religious faiths and political creeds inhabit the land. Enumerated according to the religion they follow Muslims form the preponderating majority in the whole State, being as large as 78% of the total population.

Among the minorities Sikhs and Budhists number sixty thousand each but while the former are spread all over the State the latter are concentrated in the eastern part of Ladakh in the Tehsil of Leh.

In the Jammu Province majority of the Hindus including untouchables, numbering about eight hundred thousand, are living in the three districts of Kathua, Jammu and Udhampur. In Kashmir Valley Muslims are, compared with Hindus, in the proportion of 18:1. Almost all Hindus in the Valley are Brahmins popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits. They are about

eighty thousand in number half of whom live in t
city, the rest being spread all over the country si
The Frontier illaqas of Gilgit and Skardu are, barri
a few Hindu traders and officials, wholly Muslim.

These were the figures for different communiti
four years ago. Mass killings and migration of popul
tions on an unprecedented scale during the commun
disturbances and political upheavel of 1947 broug
about some change in this statistical complexion. No
the three districts of Jammu, Kathua and Udhampu
are wholly Hindu. About the partition of Udhampu
district on a communal basis and the creation of a ne
Muslim district of Doda we shall have to refer in th
course of this survey later. The regions and part
now forming Azad Kashmir territories that is Mirpu
district, parts of Poonch, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit an
Skardu have become wholly Muslim; only a fe
thousand Hindus continue to live there.

Owing to uncertain conditions born of the disput
between India and Pakistan and the fear of war o
communal riot breaking out at any moment, migra
tion of the members of minorities gradually an
imperceptibly continues unabated not only across th
cease fire line but also within the areas now under the
Indian Government. The Kashmir Valley is gettin
denuded of the Hindu population and the Jammu
districts of the Muslims.

Geographically, historically, linguistically, cultu-
rally and administratively the Kashmir province is dif-
fer from the Jammu province.

The State is linked with the outside world by three motorable roads. These are known as the Banihal road, Jhelum Valley road and Abbotabad Kashmir road. All the three roads originate from Srinagar, the capital of the State. The Banihal road runs through the mountainous ranges of the Jammu province and terminates at Madhopur in the Indian territory. At present this is the only road linking Kashmir with the outside world. During winter this road is closed for traffic to Kashmir Valley due to heavy snow falls on the Banihal. The Jhelum Valley road and the Abbotabad Kashmir road pass through Azad Kashmir and terminate at Kohala and Ramkot respectively in the the Pakistan territory. Due to hostilities in Kashmir between India and Pakistan both these roads are closed to all public traffic.

There are four main rivers as well. Of these, the Sindh, the Jhelum and the Chenab wind their way through Azad Kashmir areas and flow down into Pakistan. The Ravi has its source in the mountains of the Jammu Province and after passing through a part of the East Punjab goes into Pakistan. Before the dispute over Kashmir arose, the entire stocks of forest timber, which used to yield a very large income, nearly 33% of the total revenue of the State, were carried down to markets in the Punjab through these rivers.

Four years back there was a mass upheavel in the Jammu and Kashmir State. This closely followed an armed rising in Poonch against the autocratic Dogra rule.

Important changes took place which, in turn, materially altered the political and economic situation in the country and the shape of things then existing. The issue whether the State should join India or Pakistan and failure to settle it speedily brought in their wake untold misery and hardships for the people.

At present the State is passing through a period of great stress and strain. The freedom movement, which took birth in 1931 when the people of the State stirred, for the first time, against the century-old autocratic Dogra rule and resolved to work unflinchingly for a democratic set up in the State, has become wider in its scope and extent. The people are engaged in a grim fight for the liberation of their mother country from the grip of alien autocracy, fuedal reaction, communal fascism and nationalist totalitarianism. They are determined to free themselves from political subjugation and economic bondage; they desire to achieve for themselves a respectful place in the family of nations of the world. Kashmir's war of liberation, which compares favourably with freedom movements in other countries, has attracted the attention of the leading statesmen and politicians of the entire world who have begun to display a keen interest in the affairs of the State.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL PARTIES

To a mis-informed Indian there is only one popular political party functioning in the Jammu and Kashmir State which fully represents the entire population and that is the Kashmir National Conference. But that is not a fact. As in other parts of the world, there are people of all shades of opinion in the country. This has naturally resulted in the formation of various political organisations espousing different creeds and ideologies. The more important political organisations of the State are :—

1. The Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Mazdoor Conference.
2. The Muslim Conference.
3. The Kashmir Socialist Party.
4. The National Conference.
5. The Praja Parishad.
6. The State Kashmir Pandit's Conference.
7. The Communist party.
8. The State Akali Dal.
9. The Kashmir Democratic Union.

There are dozens of other political or semi-political parties but as they are practically of no importance and have very small following we need not take any notice of them.

A brief survey of the aims and objects of each of these important political organisations might help a student of Kashmir History to add to his information and to arrive at some truth about the present dispute. It might also enable him to understand the problem of Kashmir and the allied issues.

1. **The Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Mazdoor Conference** was formed in 1944. It is a non-communal body and has many non-Muslims on its rolls, Its high command comprises of the old guard of the National Conference. When the progressive wing of the National Conference failed to reform the organisation and to purge it of all the evils that had steadily crept into it and when they had realized that the Conference had deviated from its path set out before it, they felt the necessity of forming an independent party which would continue to guide and pilot the freedom movement of the State. Hence the formation of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference.

This Conference is wholly rational and non-communal in its out look and people of all religious beliefs are among its members. It has a humanist programme before it. The Conference aims at imparting healthy political education to the people besides fighting relentlessly for the political, social and economic freedom of the masses. The Conference believes that political or economic freedom has little value so long as the people continue to remain backward socially and culturally. To raise the cultural level of the

people and to make them intellectually fit is one of the basic principles of the organisation.

In May 1946 the Conference adopted "Azad Kashmir', as its objective. Last year Prem Nath Bazaz, the leading light of the party, published a book explaining this objective in great detail. This book, besides dealing exhaustively with the accession issue of the State, contains a fully discussed programme of action which aims at the establishment of a democratic socialist order in the State. The book has already under gone several editions.

The Kisan Mazdoor Conference, which first took shape in the Anantnag district, has now developod into a mighty political organisation; it is widely popular in the Valley of Kashmir. During the past seven years of its existence it has been engaged in a multipronged battle against autocracy of the Dogras, fascism and totalitarianism of the Nationalists, intolerance of communal fanatics as well as against poverty and ignorance. Because of its professions and programme, which are quite in conformity with its actions, it has become popular and has attracted large masses to its fold. The manner in which it stood by its promises to the people of Kashmir at this grave hour of their history and resisted the onslaughts of the Nationalists on the freedom of the people has tremendously increased its influence and prestige. During last one year a good deal of literature has been circulated in the State through the workers of the Conference which has further strengthened it. The Kisan Mazdoor Conference is the real opposition party in the State. At present,

the people of the Valley look to it for guidance and leadership and take keen interest in its activities.

The views of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference about the burning issue of accession are well known. It advocates a free and impartial plebiscite on the basis of adult franchise, conducted under the United Nations' supervision, as the only practicable means of ascertaining the will of the people In keeping with the principle of self determination for all, it has suggested holding of regional plebiscite, if demanded, in order to afford an opportunity to any homogenous areas of the State to express their wishes separately. The Conference demands appointment of a neutral administration or an all-parties Government in place of the Abdulla Government and complete withdrawal of all foreign armies from the State as conditions precedent to the holding of a plebiscite.

More than a thousand workers including almost all the members of the Working Committee and the General Council of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference were arrested by the Nationalist administration. They were also put to all sorts of troubles and humiliations in other ways.

Abdul Salam Yatu, President of Kisan Mazdoor Conference, was externed to Pakistan in March 1951 after he served a long term of imprisonment in the State.

Yatu has been associated with the freedom movement of the State from the very begining. In 1931 he

was arrested for the first time for taking part in the movement. From 1939 to 1945 he played an active role in the State politics as a member of the General Council of the National Conference. In 1944, feeling disgusted with the anti-democratic actions of the Abdullah clique, Yatu founded the All Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Conference. He was elected first President of the Conference in 1946. In 1947 he was imprisoned twice for delivering speeches against the Dogra rule. In January 1948 he was arrested by Abdullah's administration and kept behind the prison bars for more than three years. In March, 1951 he was banished from the State to Pakistan.

Mohammad Sikandar Malik, General Secretary of Kisan Mazdoor Conference, was first arrested by the Maharaja's Government in 1947 and remained in prison for nearly six months. He was again arrested in September 1949 for leading a demonstration in the Anantnag town. For the third time Malik was arrested in July 1951 for advocating boycott of the elections to the Constituent Assembly and released after four months detention.

2. **The Muslim Conference** is one of the oldest political organisations of the State. It owes its origin he year 1931 when the people of the State, particularly the Muslims, blew the bugle of jehad against t he autocratic rule of the Dogra Maharaja.

The Muslim Conference supports the two Nation theory of the Muslim League although it has time and again declared that, when and if it came to power,

non-Muslims would be treated fairly and even generously. Its membership consists only of Muslims. It received a set back in 1939 when it was converted into the National Conference. Some leaders, however, revived it in 1942 and the Conference reappearead on the political scene of the State with fresh vigour and energy. With the birth of Pakistan this Conference received an impetus among the State Muslims.

The Muslim Conference stands for unconditional accession of the State to Pakistan. It is not, however, opposed to the holding of a free plebiscite. Almost all the top ranking leaders and prominent workers of the Conference have been banished or forced to flee from the State. At present it is the party in power in Azad Kashmir and is directing its movement from there. In the valley itself it is in a disorganised condition as there is no outstanding personality to lead it. Its most prominent leaders are:—Ghulam Abbas, Mir Wazir Mohammed Yusuf Shah and Sardar Ibrahim. Abbas has been to prison several times.

3. **The Kashmir Socialist Party** is nine years old. Originally this party was formed by a small group of some known Radical thinkers and intellectuals of the State with the express intention of educating public opinion and making the people of the State conversant with their political, social and economic problems. Now it is an allied organisation of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference and follows a similar political programme and policy. It is generally known in Kashmir as the

intellectual wing of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference. Noor Mohammed, General Secretary of the Party, who is popularly known in Kashmir as Comrade, is at present, for the second time during past four years, living a prison life.

Noor Mohammed is a young man of 28 years. He started his political career in 1940, working enthusiastically for the establishment of a Responsible Government in the State. In 1942, severing connections with the National Conference of which he was a member, he joined hands with the Radicals and became a member of the Kashmir Socialist Party. In September 1947, he was elected the General Secretary of the Party.

Noor Mohammed was arrested along with hundreds of his colleagues in October 1947 by the Nationalist Government for advocating a free and fair plebiscite as the only real solution of the accession issue. He remained in different prisons without trial for about 20 months. He was rearrested in July 1951 and continues to be behind the bars.

4. **The National Conference** which was born in 1939 by conversion of the original Muslim Conference is at present the ruling party on this side of the cease fire line. For a few years after its birth it was regarded as the most popular and organised political party of the State but as soon as it gave up its revolutionary character and became a tool in the hands of the capitalists, reactionaries and communalists, its influence and prestige in Kashmir began to dwindle.

The undemocratic and highly objectionable actions of its leaders and their greed for wealth and power and fame coupled with the growing influence of the Socialists in Kashmir and Muslim League politics in India gave it a tremendous set back from which it could not revive. The last dose of the shock was administered to it in 1946 when it failed miserably in its "Quit Kashmir" adventure. The Conference has lost the confidence of the people. It is alive inside Kashmir with the support of the Indian bayonets and outside the State with the publicity of the Hindu Press.

The National Conferenee is in favour of Kashmir's accession to India. During past few years it has passed a number of resolutions affirming this attitude. The Conference demands continuous stationing of the Indian troops in the State till the reslt of a plebiscite is known. Also, it emphatically demands that the present Nationalist Government should be recognised as the only legal Government for the entire State and that Azad Kashmir areas should be restored to its rule.

The internal quarrels and rifts in the National Conference have further contributed to the decline of its strength. The majority of the rank and file muslim members of the Conference find it increasingly difficult to agree with the High Command on the accession issue and they should have all deserted it only if they had no personal interests associated with it. The misrule of the Abdulla administration has also played a large part in widening the gulf of the differences within the

Conference. During the past four years, more than 50% of the independent members have severed connection with the Conference. The people of Kashmir do not take any interest in the public meetings and activities of its leaders and it is because of the hostile attitude of the people that the Conference has decided to hold as few public meetings as possible.

Despite all this it must be recognised that the National Conference is one of the best organised parties in the State and its top leaders are experienced, clever as well as mischievous. The notable leaders of the National Conference include Sheikh Abdulla, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and Sardar Budh Singh. All of them have been to prison in the previous regimes.

The National Conference has published a manifesto outlining its political and economic programme. This is in the form of a booklet entitled "New Kashmir". It aims at establishing a Responsible Government" in the State on more or less communistic lines but, strangely enough, with the Dogra Maharaja as the Constitutional Head.

5. **The Praja Parishad** of Jammu is a recent addition to the number of the political parties in the State though its ideology is as old as that of the R, S. S. When the R. S. S. was declared unlawful, the Sanghi leaders of the province lost no time in forming another party known as the Praja Parishad. Its policy and programme are apparently non-communal but it is known for its leanings towards R. S. S. and derives all its inspiration from those quarters.

As the effective opposition party in the Jammu Province the Parishad has been a source of permanent headache and discomfort to the Nationalist Government. Though its views on accession issue are identical with those of the National Conference, it does not agree with the internal policy of the Government and is highly critical of it. The leader of the Praja Parishad is Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, a retired Deputy Commissioner who was kept in detention by the Abdullah Government for about six months in 1949.

6. **All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference** is as old as the Muslim Conference. It is generally regarded in Kashmir as the representative organisation of the reactionary upper classes and communal minded Kashmiri Pandits. For the last twenty years it has been pursuing a policy based on the principles of loyalism and convesvatism. It has always supported the Dogra rule.

Recently the Conference decided to merge itself with the National Conference. This is perhaps due to the realisation of the fact that since the Nationalists have, by and large, assumed the role of Hindu reactionaries in the State, the existence of the Kashmiri Pandit Conference as a separate organisation is not only redundant but also harmful to the best interests of the upper class Hindus. Shiv Narain Fotedar, a discharged Government servant, is the top most leader of the Conference.

7. **The Communist Party in Kashmir** is playing the same role in the State as its parent organisation in

India. Its membership in the State is the smallest. The activities of the members of the party are confined to spread of imported ideas and distribution of literature. It has no clear policy of its own. Though critical of the National leaders it would still ask the people to throw in their lot with the National Conference.

On accession issue, the opinion among the party members is divided. Majority of the Muslim comrades favour Kashmir's accession to Pakistan whereas all the non-muslims advocate State's accession to India. This peculiar policy of the party has clearly exposed it to the charge that the communists are communal minded and intellectually dishonest. Besides, they ppear to have no other aim than to create chaos in the State.

8. The State Akali Dal claims to be the representative body of the Sikhs living in the State. It is generally known in the country as the Kashmir edition of Shiromani Akali Dal of India, which follows a communal policy.

The State Akali Dal functions mainly in the Jammu Provice. Before the disturbances of 1947, it commanded some influence among the Sikhs in Nothern part of the Kashmir Valley. It is opposed to the present Nationalist Government though it also stands for Kashmir's accession to India.

9. **The Kashmir Democratic Union** is only one year old. It has been founded in Delhi by a number of Socialists of Kashmir headed by Prem Nath Bazaz.

During the past one and a half years the Kashmir Democratic Union has done yoeman's service to the cause of Kashmir's freedom. It has issued volumes of literature on Kashmir which was widely distributed in the State and outside. The activities of the Union are well appreciated by the State's people and the literature supplied by it is greedily read and circulated.

Because of the work it did during the last year, the name of the Kashmir Democratic Union has become popular in the State. It follows a humanist programme and stands for the establishment of a democratic social order in the country. So far as the accession issue is concerned, it stands for a free plebiscite with the right to homogenous areas to vote separately if they so desire.

Prem Nath Bazaz, the President of the Union, started his political career in 1930 on the eve of the birth of Kashmir's Freedom Movement. He is a dynamic personality in Kashmir politics. He is an institution by himself. He was elected as the President of the Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha (now Kashmiri Pandit's Conference) in 1931. That year he worked as an official member of the Grievances Enquiry (Glancy) Commission and the Constitutional Reforms Conference. In 1932, he started the first newspaper, the daily "Vitasta," in Kashmir to popularise progressive Nationalism and non-communal politics. This was when Sheikh Abdullah and his gang were staunchly advocating communal outlook.

In 1935, Bazaz started the weekly "Hamdard" in collaboration with Sheikh Abdullah who had by then come round to agree with Nationalist ideology. Bazaz was arrested in 1938 movement and was imprisoned along with other colleagues including Sheikh Abdullah and Chowdhry Abbas.

When in 1939 the Muslim Conference was converted into the National Conference, Bazaz was the first non-Muslim to be elected a member of its Working Committee. In 1942, after differences cropped up between Radicals led by him and Nationalists led by Abdullah, he and his supporters resigned from the National Conference. Bazaz founded the Kashmir Socialist Party in 1942. In the following year he was elected to preside over the all Jammu and Kashmir Press Conference.

On April 10, 1947 an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Nationalists on Bazaz's life. In October 1947, he was the first political leader of Kashmir to be arrested for demanding a free and impartial plebiscite to decide the accession issue of the State.

Bazaz is author of several books, notable among which are Inside Kashmir, Azad Kashmir, and Gandhism, Jinnahism, Socialism.

Sham Lal Yechha, Secretary of the Kashmir Democratic Union, has been associated with the Socialist Movement in Kashmir for the last so many years. In 1942, the Socialist Students's Union was formed in Srinagar of which Yechha was a sponsor. From 1942

to 1950 he worked untiringly for the Socialist Movement in the State,

In 1950, Yechha was elected Secretary of the Kashmir Democratic Union in Delhi. He was arrested by the Nationalist Government of Kashmir in July 1951 at Anantnag—a town 32 miles away from Srinagar—for preaching the boycott of the elections to the nationalist-arranged Constituent Assembly, He is still behind the prison bars.

CHAPTER III

CONDITIONS IN JAMMU

The state of affairs in the Jammu Province, born of its geographical conditions and the composition of the population, conveys altogether a different, picture of the political situation. In this Provincet Muslims formed the majority of the population in some districts which are now under Azad Kashmir. The areas under the Nationalist rule at present have been cleared of the bulk of the Muslim population during riots of 1947. Thus Hindus have become the dominant group in the three districts of Kathua, Jammu and Udhampur, Hindus are more than 97% of the total population in this region. About the partition of the Udhampur district I shall have to say more later.

Unlike Kashmir, the politics in the Jammu Province has always been influenced by rank communalism. The people, both Hindus and Muslims, never accepted the leadership of the National Conference and that is why the Nationalists command practically no influence or popularity in the Province. Prior to the 1947 upheaval, the Hindus followed the lead given by the Rajya Hindu Sabha and R.S.S., the communal organisations now replaced by the Praja Parishad, and the Muslims *en masse* rallied round the banner of the Muslim Conference.

In the three Hindu districts of Jammu neither the Kisan Mazdoor Conference nor the Muslim Conference wield any appreciable influence at present.

Provincial prejudice reigns supreme in the minds of the Jammu Hindus who consider the Kashmir Province as seperate from theirs in all respects, politically, culturally. historically and geographically. Everything of Kashmir origin is alien to Dogras. They feel that their interests are being sacrificed and that their existence is at stake. This was admitted even by Sardar Budhsingh, a top leader of the National Conference, in course of a statement which he issued to press soon after he resigned the post of a Minister in the Abdullah Cabinet two years back. He said that "the interests of the people of Jammu were being neglected and it was of no use for him to continue in the Cabinet of Sheikh Abdullah." Since then this charge has been corroborated by the statements of various other political leaders and businessmen of the Province. In fairness it must be added that Kashmiris are no less parochial and they too consider Dogras as aliens.

The Hindus of Jammu, organised under the banner of the Praja Parishad, are up against the present Nationalist Government of Kashmir. They stand for perpetuation of the Dogra rule in the whole State, if possible, at any rate in the three districts of Jammu and on this issue they are prepared to make no compromise. Soon after the manipulated voluntary externment from the State of Maharaja Hari Singh

was implemented by Sheikh Abdullah a province-wide agitation was launched by the Praja Parishad in 1949 for the recall of the Maharaja and it was with great difficulty that Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and the Nationalist leaders of Kashmir persuaded the Parishad leaders to call off the agitation in the "larger interests" of India and the State. At that time it was understood that the Parishad leaders were assured that the Maharaja would be reinstalled in his GADI at the proper time and that his so-called externment had been brought about only to placate the Muslims of Kashmir who had grown highly suspicious of the Nationalist Government because of its foreign and home policies.

Maharaja Hari Singh's "externment', has helped the Nationalists in no way. Indeed it has harmed them so far as their relations with the Dogras are concerned, because the Jammu Hindus feel very bitter about it. On the other hand Kashmiri Muslims have not been mollified. They say, and rightly so, that Hari Singh's place has been naturally occupied by his son Yuvraj Karan Singh who enjoys equal powers and privileges. According to his "firman" (royal proclamation) appointing Karan Singh as Regent of the State Maharaja Hari Singh has delegated all powers to him. The Yuvraj has the authority to dissolve the Ministry if and when he likes. No legislation can be introduced in the State without the approval of the Yuvraj. The alien Dogra rule is, therefore, alive and kicking and the descendents of Gulab Singh have not left Kashmir.

That a big sum of Rs. 2,100,000/- is annually paid to Maharaja Hari Singh from the exchequer of the State is a further proof of the fact that the Nationalists of Kashmir have no intention to obliterate all traces of the Dogra rule in the State. Yuvraj Karan Singh is likewise paid a huge sum annually. It is wrong to think that had Hari Singh been in the State he would, under the changed circumstances, enjoy more powers and command greater influence. That being so, the so-called externment of Hari Singh and installation of Karan Singh on the throne makes no difference so far as the people of Kashmir are concerned.

These facts clearly prove that the "externment" of Maharaja Hari Singh has not been brought about because the Nationalists are anxious to wipe out all traces of Dogra rule in the State. Far from it. The move is simply designed to appease the Muslims of Kashmir and to mislead them into believing that the Government has an anti-Dogra programme before it and, therefore, they should lend their full support to it. Sheikh Abdullah is at pains to prove that he and his Muslim colleagues are more communal than the Pakistani Muslims are believed to be. Whatever the motive, the fact remains that neither their assurances to retain Dogra rule has pacified the Hindus of Jammu nor the so-called externment of Hari Singh has in any way deluded the people of Kashmir. As already stated. the Hindus of Jammu have adopted an uncompromising attitude as far as the question of Maharaja Hari Singh is concerned. They are powerfully swayed by Provincial sentiments and religious

emotions. Hence their opposition to the continued "banishment" of the Maharaja.

PARTITION OF THE STATE

The Hindus of Jammu appear to be convinced of the fact that the fate of the State is ultimately to be decided through the democratic method of a free and fair plebiscite and it is their firm and unshakable belief that, in the event of a plebiscite being held, the State will undoubtedly go to Pakistan. This has made them apprehensive about their future; they are not prepared to link their fate with that of Pakistan.

Knowing that India cannot continue her occupation of the State even by force of arms for ever, the Hindus of Jammu have been fighting for such a solution of the accession issue whereby the Hindu majority areas of the Proviuce are allowed to continue to remain an integral part of India. Consequently the idea of partitioning the State on communal basis has gained momentum in the Province and the Hindus and their leaders are favourably disposed towards it. This has been revealed, among others, by Maulvi Mohammed Syeed, General Secretary of the National Conference, also who recently disclosed in course of a public speech at Jammu that "he had heard reports saying that Parishad leaders favoured the solution of the accession issue as offered by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, till recently a Member of the Indian Cabinet." Dr. Ambedkar had suggested that Jammu and Ladakh should go to India and the rest to Pakistan.

More clear and significant is the speech delivered by Mr. Sant Ram Badu, a prominent leader of the Parishad, at a workers convention held in Jammu on 9th of November, 1951. He said:—

"Geographically, culturally and linguistically. the State of Jammu and Kashmir is divided into several regions namely Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Gilgit. Sir Owen Dixon, a reputed jurist, has also admitted this in his report to the Security Council.

"The Indian National Congress and the National Conference have also in their annual Sessions at Karachi and Sopore (Kashmir) respectively passed resolutions conceding the right of self-determination to every nation and granting fullest autonomy to every political unit on the basis of its liguistic, cultural and geographical set up..... ..... If the fate of Kashmir is to be decided by Kashmiris themselves, the Dogras of Jammu, whose numerical strength is well above one million and two hundred thousand must have the right to determine their fate themselves."

("CHAND" Jammu, November 19, 1951).

The Praja Parishad of Jammu has recently drawn up a long programme of action. It has also declared its aims and objects. These can be summarised thus:—

(a) Application in toto of the Indian Constitution to the Jammu and Kashmir State.

(b) Establishment of a responsible Government in the State with the Maharaja as the Constitutional Head.

(c) Payment of compensation to the landlords in the light of the procedure adopted in this connexion by the Indian Constitution.

(d) Banning of cow slaughter in the State.

(e) Resettlement of Hindu refugees.

(f) Lifting of restrictions on the entry into the State of exiled Parishad leaders.

On the question of the Constitution for the State the Parishad has emphatically declared, time and again that it will not be bound by the Constitution to be drawn up by the so-called Constituent Assembly of the Nationalists which, according to the Parishad, does not enjoy the confidence of the Hindus of Jammu.

As in the Kashmir Province, the Nationalist Government has so far miserably failed to deal effectively with the opposition in the Jammu Province put up by the Praja Parishad. The Government's failure to do so is mainly due to the fact that the Hindus of Jammu enjoy full moral support of the Hindus of India whom it cannot afford to displease. That is also why the Abdulla Government allows a little of political freedom to Praja Parishad whereas the same is totally denied to the popular political parties of Kashmir.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCANDALOUS REGIME

In October 1947, soon after the people of Jammu and Kashmir rose in revolt against the autocratic Dogra rule, the fugitive Maharaja Hari Singh gave reins of authority into the hands of the National Conference Sheikh Abdullah, the President of the Conference, became the Prime Minister of the newly constituted Maharaja's Government. He formed a Cabinet consisting entirely of the Nationalists.

This action of the Mahara a heightened the tension already prevailing in the State over the accession issue. The National Conference, which was once held in high esteem for its democratic aims and socialist programme, had turned counter revolutionary. Because of its fascist methods and undemocratic actions, it had completely fallen in the estimation of the people who looked down upon it as a tool in the hands of capitalists and reactionaries. It had lost the confidence of the people and had been reduced to a minority political party. The people of the State had given their verdict against the conference in 1946 when they refused to fall into the trap laid by the Conference leaders in the shape of "Quit Kashmir" slogan. Had it not been so, Sheikh Abdulla, who delivered a fiery speech on 16th of May, 1946 in Srinagar declaring that "he would avenge the treachery of the Dogras from the successors and great

grandsons of Raja Gulab Singh," would not have been compelled to eat his own words and offer volte, face before the court trying him for treason by saying that he was not against the ruling prince.

The circumstances prevailing in October 1947 warranted setting up of an All-Parties Government representing all sections of the people. This was not done. Instead, one party rule of the unpopular Nationalists was foisted on the State in utter disregard of the wishes of the people. This gave rise to grave suspicions and doubts in the minds of the people who looked upon the move as the outcome of a secret deal between the Maharaja, the Indian National Congress and the Kashmir National Conference, Naturally their attitude stiffened and they turned more hostile.

Keen and anxious to retain power which came as a gift to them in lieu of their services to the Maharaja and their Congress patrons, the Nationalists are trying their level best to suppress the freedom loving people of the State who are determined to overthrow the present regime by peaceful and constitutional methods.

REIGN OF TERROR.

In the Nationalists' rule the people of the State have suffered tremendously. Politically they are suppressed; their economic condition has deteriorated; they have been robbed of whatever little freedom they enjoyed under the Dogras before the advent of the Nationalists to power.

Whatever the patrons of the Nationalists might say in defence of the present unpopular Government, the fact remains that Kashmir is at present ruled by the law of the jungle. A reign of terror has been let loose and the Nationalist Government has concentrated all its energies on suppressing the mounting wave of opposition in the State which is the direct outcome of its misdeeds. Political freedom in Kashmir has become a thing of the past.

The methods employed by the Nationalist Government, which is generally known in Kashmir by the name of the Goonda Government, to stifle the voice of the people are Hitlerian in character. The right to hold public meetings or take out processions of political nature is totally denied to people other than the Nationalists who are at full liberty to organise meetings and processions. The oppositionists can not hold a single public meeting or organise a procession. Whenever an attempt is made by the main opposition parties like the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party, the Muslim Conference and the Praja Parishad to hold any meetings it is frustrated by the Nationalists by use of brute force. If the Nationalist volunteers are unable to do the job the police, the Militia men and even the Military are detailed for help.

The defenders of the Nationalist Government say that no public meetings are held or processions taken out because there are no opposition parties in the State. But this argument does not stand scrutiny and

has worn thin in view of the fact that opposition parties like the Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party, the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, the Communist Party, the State Kashmiri Pandit Conference and the Praja Parishad do exist in the State and some of them are older than the National Conference, the party in power.

To say that these parties exist only in name and that they are organisationally weak is mere distortion of facts and an attempt to mislead the people outside the State. For, we see that before the Nationalists came to power, these parties did hold well attended open public meetings and big annual conferences, fought elections and indulged in all legitimate political activities. That these parties should soon after the establishment of the Nationalist rule in the State, become non-existent overnight or organisationally weak, should leave no doubt in the minds of the people as to the campaign of ruthless suppression of these parties by the Nationalists.

This prompts us to examine the campaign of mass arrests of prominent political leaders and workers which closely followed the rise of the Nationalists to power. In early days of the Nationalists' rule no less than 3,000 such leaders and workers in the valley alone were consigned to prisons many of which were speedily improvised to accomodate them. They included prominent personalities like Abdul Salam Yatu, Prem Nath Bazaz, Habib Ullah Shah, Ahad Ullah

Mir, Mohd. Akram, Noor Mohammed, Ghulam Ahmad Naz, Abdul Ahad, Mohd. Amin Haider, Mir Sikandar Malik, Kanhya Lal Kaul, Prithvi Nath, Asad Ullah Reshi, Qudus Bhat, Ghulam Mohammed Parey and a host of other workers of the two non-communal parties, the Kişan Mazdoor Conference and the Kashmir Socialist Party. Prominent Muslim Conferencites who were arrested included Maulvi Noor Din, Maulvi Abdulla of Shopian, Khwaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, Mr. Mohammed Yusuf Qureshi, Maulvi Mohammed Amin, Khwaja Inayat Ullah Kakroo and many others. Chowdhery Ghulam Abbas, Chowdhery Allah Rakha Sagar and Agha Shaukat, all top ranking leaders of the Muslim Conference, had already been confined to prison by the Maharaja's previous Government. Prior to this, the Goverment had externed from the State some of the prominent Muslim leaders like Mir Waiz Yusuf Shah, Ch: Hamid Ullah Khan and Mr. Ishaq Qureshi. Some leading Hindu leaders such as Kavi Raj Vaishnau Gupta, Pandit Sheo Narayan Fotedar and Pandit Zanardhan Teng were also exiled by the Nationalists. Many more Hindu workers were arrested.

In the summer of 1948 when the members of the U.N.C.I.P. visited the State, the people in Srinagar and elsewhere made frantic efforts to contact them and to protest against the highhandedness of the Nationalist Government. But the Government took all possible steps to frustrate these efforts. A strong contingent of C.I.D. police was detailed to shadow the U.N.C.I.P. members, wherever they went. Any body

who tried to go near the members was promptly arrested and brutally molested. Some patriotic women were among the demonstrators when the Commission visited S. P. College in summer 1948. The demonstrators peacefully, though emphatically demanded an immediate solution of the Kashmir tangle on the basis of a free and impartial plebiscite and protested against the misdeeds of the Nationalist Government. The members of the Commission had hardly entered the College Gate when the police arrested the demonstrators including the women who were pulled by the hair while being taken to the lock up. Such brutalities have been repeated times without number.

That the Nationalist Government do not in any way allow the people of the State to place their view point before any neutral outsider has been well corroborated by Dr. Josef Korbel, a member of the Kashmir Commission. In a revealing article published in an American magazine, the Commonweal, he says:—

"The people of Srinagar would secretly come to see us or start to talk to us in shops; they besieged us —often in tears—to liberate them from the Indian rule. On one occasion I was in Baramulla, a town 35 miles from Srinagar. Half of the town was in ruins. We went from one place to another jumping over piles of bricks and stones followed by thousands of the local people and surrounded by the Indian Police. Someone made a speech claiming that all Kashmiris want to live in India. Most people, looking like half-dead wrecks, listened with apathy. Here

and there one could hear a slogan shouted: 'Long live India, long live the Hindus and Muslims in a United India.' I had lived long enough in a totalitarian country (Yugoslavia) to recognise the feigned spontaneity of such demonstrations.

PRO-PAKISTAN VIEWS

"Suddenly a young man stepped out of the crowd, shouting in English: "We want to join Pakistan". The police dealt with him quickly. The Commission asked the local authorities to release him and bring him to the Mayor's house. A few minutes later the Mayor announced that the man was waiting for us. When he appeared we saw that he was someone other than the youngster whom we had seen a little while before. We told the Mayor that this was not the same man, to which he replied that it was the same man. However, the man said : 'Yes, I am somebody else. My friend is in prison, but it does not matter; I can also tell you that we want to join Pakistan."

The manner in which these arrests were made and the treatment meted out to political detenus in jails frightens every decent man out of breath. National Conference volunteers were given powers to affect arrests without legal warrants. Respectable people were roughly handled and publicly beaten by these new guardians of law and order. Dirt was thrown at the faces of the arrested persons. The people of the State have not yet forgotten the months of November and December 1947 when every day scores of people

would be chained like animals by any kind of rope available at the moment, dragged to the prison cells, tied to their feet and drenched in mud and dung. The detenus were huddled together in dark cells. Meagre quantities of rations were doled out to them which fell far below their normal requirements. Often they had to go without any kind of meal. Many of the prominent detenus were mercilessly beaten within the prison walls and asked to undergo hard labour. The situation became so alarming and horrible that the detenus in the jails had to go on hunger strike against this maltreatment by the Nationalist authorities.

Arrests of people belonging to the opposition parties have continued in the State during past four years. Just at the moment the Jails in the State hold many scores of political prisoners and detenus. Some of them have been there for years; some have seen several terms of imprisonment in the Nationalist regime They include Noor Mohammed, General Secretary of the Kashmir Socialist Party, Among those in detention at present are Sham Lal Yechha, Secretary of the Kashmir Democratic Union. In November 1951 as many as 120 political prisoners were released on parole from the Central Jail, Sri nagar. Sikandar Malik, General Secretary of the Kisan Ma zdoor Conference, Qadir Bhat, Ali Mohammad, Abdul Rahim Waza and Jalal-ud-Din, prominent-leaders of the Muslim Conference, were among them. Most of the leaders of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party and the Muslim Confer

ence who were arrested in 1947 or after have been already banished from the State.

Before being conducted to various jails, the political detenus are brought to the Kothi Bagh Police Station in Srinagar which is commonly known in the State as the slaughter house and subjected to all sorts of torture. Ghulam Qadir Ganderbali, a close associate of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Deputy Prime Minister, has been specially appointed to conduct and supervise the concentration camp at Kothi Bagh and to advise on methods of torture which include beating by lathis and whips, pulling of whiskers. pressing of testicles and dragging on pavements with hands and feet tied together. At least in one case hot iron was applied to the person of a political detenu to extort confession. In another case cold water was poured over some detenus' heads during the freezing nights of January with the same end in view. In some other cases arrested people were trampled upon till a few of them vomitted blood. For this cruel and inhuman behavior Ganderbali is notoriously known in the valley as the hangman. He was a constable in the previous regime and has been raised to the position of an Inspector of Police by Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammed, the Police Minister.

A special Police force on the pattern of Hitler's Gestapo has been raised in the valley. The number of C.I.D. men has been increased ten fold in order to exercise a check on the activities of all those who do not share the views held by the Nationalists or who,

because of their bitter experience during past some years, have become increasingly critical of the regime. If you happen to talk to somebody on politics in a street, a hotel or at a shop he will atonce point out to the presence of a Government detective just beside you and will beg of you not to talk anything about politics particularly what is not palatable to the Nationalists. In present-day Kashmir you will find a C.I.D. man after every five houses. Where the men of the Special Police fail paid volunteers of the National Conference under different names such as the Peace Brigade are called out to do the job for them.

ONSLAUGHT ON PRESS

The Nationalist Governmet has not failed to take notice of the fact that its campaign of ruthless persecution cannot be complete without laying its icy hand on the freedom of the press. Accordingly, it has managed to bring about cessation of the publication of almost all journals and periodicals which advocated an independent policy and did not subscribe to the views held by the Nationalists.

Before the Nationalists were installed in the seats of power by the Maharaja nearly 50 journals were published from Srinagar and Jammu. Of these more than half have become defunct Some of the leading papers such as "Daily Hamdard", "Weekly Islah" and Weekly "Amar" fell victim to the grinding sword of precensorship restrictions where as papers like "New Kashmir", "Ranbir", "Milat", "Kas-

mir" and "Johar" were forced to close down. Underhand methods were employed to gag the mouth of the "Daily Martand" and when it was felt that any direct action against the paper would bring the Government further into disrepute, the proprietors of the press, where it was being printed, were threatened with severest possible punishment if they printed the paper. In some cases heavy securities were demanded. In this connection mention may be made of the weekly "Noor". Some of the papers in Jammu such as "Javeed", "Pasban", "Jumhoor", and "Naujawan" had already ceased to exist as their prorietors ran away from the State for their lives soon after communal riots started in the Province.

Several prominent journalists were arrested and brutally molested. Those who were arrested included Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Editor of the daily "Hamdard", Pandit Prem Nath Kana, Editor of th "Kashmir", Mr. Aziz Kashmiri, editor of th "Roshni", Pt. Dina Nath "Mast", prorietor and Edito of three journals, "Naya Sansar", "Albarque" ar "Rahbar", Lala Shiv Ram Gupta, Editor of the "Ama and Kh. Ghulam Mohi-ul-Din, Editor of the "Noo The office of the English Weekly, "Kashmir Time was raided by the Nationalists and all the furnitu and the machinery of the press owned by the pa were removed to Mujahid Manzil, Headquarters the National Conference as loot. The furniture the printing machinery were ultimately transfe into the hands of the Management of the daily "K

mat", official organ of the National Conference without paying even a farthing to the proprietors.

Kashmiris have not forgotten the day when Pandit Som Nath Tikoo, Editor of the "New Kashmir," a pro-National Conference paper of Srinagar, was pushed out of his office by the storm troopers (Militiamen) of the National Conference, beaten mercilessly and dragged like a dead dog on the snow-covered Residency Road in Srinagar in winter 1948, He was tortured only because he had editorially criticised the misdeeds of the National Government.

In order to arrest the growth of healthy opposition, to circumscribe the freedom of the Press and to bring about cessation of the remaining critical journals of the State, some arbitrary laws have been enacted. One of the laws provides that every person who wants to start a new paper or to resume publication of an old one must first deposit security with the Government, This ban did not exist in the previous regime and has totally discouraged the people who want the press in the State to flourish and prosper. Recently an amendment was made in the Press and Publications Act of the State which provides for the "standardisation" and "regulation" of the volume, size and publication of the newspapers. While effecting the amendment in the Act no attention has obviously been paid to the limitations which the newspapers in the State are at present suffering from. Naturally this measure of the Government came under heavy fire of criticism. Nearly all papers of the State

denounced the move as "unjust and highly objectionable". The Kashmir Journalists Association, most of whose members represent the Nationalist Press, unanimously criricised the Nationalist Government for introducing the amendment to the Press Act, On 23rd of November the Association unanimously passed a resolution criticising the action of the Government. The resolution said:—

> "The atitude of the maiority of the State's papers towards the said amendment has been hostile. It was quite necessary that the opinion of the Press was obtained before the amendment was introduced. It was expected that this opinion would be honoured. This has not been done.....In the opinion of the Association it is not fair to impose restrictions on the press in the State so long as they do not enjoy the same facilities and concessions as have been granted in other democratic countries".

In order to make the functioning of papers, other than those which wholly dance to the tune of the Nationalists, diffcult, nay impossible, invidious discrimination is observed in the allotment of official advertisements and court notices. Whereas nearly 80% of such advertisements fall to the share of the daily "Khidmat", official organ of the ruling party, only 20% are distributed among other papers which number more than twenty. In respect of the allotment of newsprint also, the "Khidmat" and other Nationlist papers like "SACH" of Jammu receive preferential treatment. Big stocks of newsprint have been and are supplied to these papers. A small portion is niggardly distributed among other papers.

How the existence of the "Khidmat", which has a very poor circulation in the State, has been made possible is an interesting story. According to the well informed quarters, it would have long ceased to exist only if the Nationalist Government were not there to support it. According to these sources, at one time a huge sum of Rs. 30,000/- was alloted to it out of the secret fund maintained by the Government. Besides this almost all Government Officers, Educational Institutions, Cooperative Societies and Panchayats, Government contractors, Ration Shop Keepers and others were forced to become paid subscribers of the paper. When a few contractors delayed payment of the subscriptions a high placed Government officer ordered that the money should be deducted from their bills. It is these contributions and subscriptions raised forcibly, no less than the secret Government aid, which have made Khidmat's existence possible.

CHAPTER V

ATROCIOUS ADMINISTRATION

The Nationalist administration is a sorry tale. It has virtually become a play thing in the hands of the National Conference workers who do not fail to derive as much personal profit as possible. Consequently blackmarket, corruption and other like evils have assumed menacing proportions.

Soon after the Nationalists got power, a shaking was given to the entire Government machinery. Men with administrative ability and high talents were hurled into background and even thrown out and inefficient, worthless and inexperienced men supporting the Abdullah clique were assigned key positions in the administration. They were appointed Secretaries, Under Secretaries and Administrative Officers. Clerks known to be favourably inclined towards the National Conference were by a stroke of pen promoted to the posts of Superintendents and were in some cases given gazetted jobs. Police constables were promoted to the ranks of Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors were made Superintendents. Even such men as were previously charged with corruption by the National Conference itself but had lately joined its ranks were given big responsible posts.

In this connexion a few cases may be cited. Sultan Galadar, an ordinary illiterate worker of the

National Conference, was appointed outright Assistant Superintendent of Police. Ghulam Qadir Ganderbali, a foot constable, rose to the rank of an Inspector. Ghulam Mohi-ul-Din, a school master, was appointed Under Secretary in the Revenue Department and Janki Nath Zutshi, who had been accused of corruption and malpractices by the National Conference itself before it came to power, was straightaway appointed Director General of Information and Broadcasting.

Pandit Jai Lal Wanchoo, a retired Tehsildar, who had been denounced and condemned by responsible leaders of the National Conference for his misbehaviour, corruption and cruelty, was recalled from India where he had been forced to migrate for fear of being brought to book for these nefarious actions and was reinstated on the post of a gazetted officer.

That the Nationalist leaders consider the State as their personal Jagir becomes quite clear when we find that Kh. Mohammed Shah, son-in-law of Sheikh Abdulla, has been appointed Controller of Civil Supplies. His brother, Ali Shah, was given a Deputy Minister's post and is now Revenue Commissoner. Col, Ghulam Qadir, who has no other qualification than that of being brother-in-law of Sheikh Abdulla, was brought from Indore to occupy the post of Deputy Minister (now Director General) of Tourism; Mirza Ghulam Mohammed Beg, brother of Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg, has been appointed Registrar of the Co-perative Department and President of the

Anantnag Town Area Committee. His another brother, Mirza Arif Beg, was given Director's post in the Sericulture Department. Bakshi Gulam Mohammed has favoured his own brother with the job of Director General of Public Cooperative Societies.

Instances of such promotions and appointments can be cited by hundreds

This kind of jobbery and nepotism greatly impaired the efficiency of the administration. The upstart nationalists, who did not know even the A B.C. of administration, have made a mess of everything. Previously addicted to malpractices, they did not hesitate to make as much profit out of their new jobs as they could. They concentrate their energies on bestowing favours on their kith and kin. They are making hay while the sun shines.

The changes effected in the personnel of the administration antagonised the trained officers and employees of the old regime. They gave up taking any lively interest in the affairs of the administration. Some of them, in utter disappointment and dejection, left the State either for Pakistan or India. They include lawyers, doctors, professors, engineers, artists and others.

In the lower ranks of clerks and menials it can be asserted without any fear of contradiction that to get a job one must be related to some Nationalist worker; qualifications for the post or efficiency to carry out the duties and responsibilities are of no avail.

The idea behind the move to reshuffle the administration was firstly to reward the National Conferencites for their "sacrifices" and "services" rendered in the cause of the freedom and secondly to enable them to stand the crisis brought about by the treachery of the Nationalists. The Nationalists justified the move on the ground that it was initiated with a view to purge the administration of all such elements as were considered hostile by them.

Corruption, jobbery and nepotism have polluted the entire administration in Kashmir. Three important incidents which have taken place in the State during last one year throw ample light on it. In one case known as the Transport scandal, Saligram Shangloo, Assistant Controller of the Transport Department and a prominent leader of the National Conference, in league with other nationalist workers is reported to have embezzled thousands of rupees. Before any inquiry into the matter could be held, Mr. Shangloo ran away from the State and thus evaded punishment.

The second case is known as the "Bhandari Company Case". As was revealed by Sheikh Mohammed Abdulla himself in an address to the Senior Government officers of the State, the Bhandari Company was granted a license for import of goods into the State of the value of one million and one hundred thousand of rupees on the recommendation of a few Government officers. The licensee, instead of importing goods into the State, disposed off the

major portion outside the State thus entailing a heavy loss to the revenue of the State. An inquiry into the matter revealed a deep laid conspiracy in which were involved some of the best friends and members of the National Conference.

The third one has come to be known as the Gulmarg Furniture Scandal in which were found involved a number of high placed Government servants of Kashmir. According to preliminary investigations, the offenders have been found guilty in a chain of thefts of furniture in some hotels of Gulmarg (Kashmir). When the officials in a State begin to resort to stealing property of citizens how can law and order be maintained ?

All these incidents show to what law level the officers and employees of the Nationalist Government have stooped.

What worsened the situation was the Nationalist Government's policy to give fullest liberty and powers to the National Conference workers to work on its behalf in respect of administration also. This policy was liberally applied to two important departments, namely food and police. The Nationalist workers were asked to "help" the Food Department in the discharge of its duties. This procedure still continues. No ration card can be issued to you if it is not verified by the National Conference workers. The verification is readily available only if you are able to pay something by way of bribe to the workers. Many people

have to go without ration cards because workers are displeased with them on some account.

Criticising this kind of procedure, the pro-National Conference daily "Martand" of Srinagar wrote :—

> "We fail to understand why should the Government entrust the National Conference with the work of verifying the ration cards when it is paying thousands of rupees to the employees of the Food Control Department by way of salary. No political organisation in the world can be free from corupt elements. The same applies to the National Conference. The people of the State very much resent interference in the administration by the members of the National Conference".

This policy of the Nationalist Government has been sedulously enforced in the State throughout the whole period of past four years. In 1948, the Government entrusted the National Conferencites with the task of collecting Shali (paddy) from the peasants under the procurement scheme. But soon it was found that the stocks of Shali thus collected were being sold in black market and that the State was faced with an acute food crisis. The situation became alarming and the Nationalist Government was compelled to launch a drive against the black marketeers. Several black marketeers were arrested in Anantnag, Kulgam and other parts and, unbelievably enough, most of them were no other than the prominent Nationalists.

The National Conference workers are also free to collect money from the people in the name of the Government. In 1949, when people in some parts of the Kashmir Valley were rendered homeless because of floods, a Relief Fund was opened by the Government. The workers of the National Conference, supported by nationalist officers of the Government, were authorised to make collections. They indulged in acts highly objectionable and immoral. They forced people to donate at their own bidding. Any body who failed to do so was mercilessly beaten, abused and dis-honoured. People thus humiliated included Pandit Laxmi Narain, B.A.L.L.B., General Secretary of the Kashmiri Pandit Conference and a leading member of the Srinagar Bar. Money is collected from people in similar manner regularly on such occasions as the visit of the Prime Minister of India for his reception or the annual session of the National Conference.

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

Abdulla Government's misrule has brought in its wake hundreds of other miseries and hardships for the people of Kashmir. Their economic condition has reached the breaking point. They are at present passing through a period of acute economic crisis. Trade and commerce have received a serious set-back. Unemployment is widespread and hunger and poverty are on the increase.

The entire trade and commerce in the State has been monopolised by the nationalist leaders, Con-

tracts about forest, food, transport, fuel etc., are being sanctioned in favour of the kith and kin of the Ministers and other Nationalist leaders and they are provided with adequate facilities to earn huge profits. Most of the contracts fall to the share of the brothers and relatives of Sheikh Abdulla and Bakshi Gulam Mohammed. This has resulted not only in a loss to the Government as these contractors offer higher rates than those tendered by others but also in the accumulation of the enrire wealth of the State in the hands of a few persons.

Lala Girdhari Lal Anand, in his annual presidential address to the Jammu Chamber of Commerce, deplored the corrupt practices of the Nationalist Government and the present miserable plight of the people of the State. He said :—

> "Due to the faulty nationalisation scheme of the Government the trade and commerce in the State has suffered a shock. People have become poorer and they have lost all purchasing capacity. It has also checked the flow of capital besides strengthening corruption in the State.....New taxes have been levied as a result of which the life in the State has become impossible".

During past few years the prices of all essential commodities have maintained a steady rise. The price of rice, the staple food of the people of Kashmir, has not registered even a slight fall. The rice supplied to the people of Srinagar through the Food Control Deparment costs about Rs. 18/- per khirwar (2 maunds). But the quota of ration supplied falls well below the normal requirments of the people. Naturally the

people have to depend on black-market where the same is selling at Rs. 80/- per Khirwar. In wintry months this figure shoots upto nearly Rs. 150/-a Khirwar and even then it is not available. The prices of other essentials of life are as high and beyond the reach of common man. For instance, salt, which is available in India at the rate of one anna a seer, is obtainable in Kashmir from controlled shops at the rate of six annas per seer.

In the course of her presidential address to the Nationalist-sponsored All Kashmir Womens Conference held at Srinagar on 24th November, 1951 Zainab Begum observed :—

> "Another problem deserving our attention are the essential necessities of life whose prices are increasing without stop. The problem of prices has attained a discouraging shape in cur country. On the one side there is no limit to the prices beyond which they cannot go and on the other incomes do not rise beyond a point, with the result that the consuming power of the large majority of people, barring a few, has decreased".

It may be stated here that Sheikh Abdullah inaugurated the Conference in which this address was delivered,

From times immemorial Kashmir has been famous for its luscious fruits. The proverbial milk and honey used to over flow the land ; they were so cheap. Even during war time a case of fruits was selling at

Rs. 10/-. Now that abundance is a dream of the past. All is being absorbed by the huge Military in occupation of the country. A case of fruit is sold now at Rs. 40/- and even then is not available in the market.

The Nationalist Government has levied new taxes and enhanced the old ones. Import and export custom duty has been increased by 33% and in some cases more than 50%. Taxes on sugar, cloth, medicine and other commodities have also been enhanced. These are over and above the taxes unofficially recovered by the National Conference from time to time. One has to pay money when the annual Session of the National Conference is held or when a distinguished guest from India visits the State. The Flood Relief tax imposed in September 1950 for only three months by raising the prices of certain controlled commodities is still being collected.

Due to insecure conditions prevailing in the State the tourist trade has suffered immensely. Very few tourists visit the State now and that too for a very short period of time. This has harmed the business class of the people as also a large number of house boat owners, hotel keepers and hawkers.

Black market is rampant in the State. In her address just referred to Zainab Begum remarked :—

> "Unfortunately during the last war the business classes have developed a mentality to grow rich over night. And then after the attack of 1947 these tendencies became

sharper. Today no one looks with favour towards any business in which one could progress by stages. Every one desires to heap money by tons in no time".

Was the gentle lady referring to the Nationalist leaders and their kith and kin who had amassed fortunes in the twinkling of eye ?

As a result of widespread unemployment, hunger poverty and evils like beggary and theft have become common, The number of beggars in the State has increased manifold. Similarly the number of brothels has also increased. Many houseboats have been converted into brothels where the honour of innocent Kashmiri women is being sold for a few coins.

The plight of the low-paid government servants is worse. The Nationalist government claimed that it would better the lot of the government employees particularly the teachers. What it has actually done is that the fat salaries of Gazetted Officers have been substantially increased and in case of teachers and others only the grades have been revised. But these revisions have not still been given effect to. A clerk in Kashmir gets Rs. 50/-per month including allowances whereas a peon gets only Rs. 28/- per month. As against this, though a Minister's salary is fixed at Rs. 1,000/-only per month in cash, he is provided with other facilities. He enjoys free bangalows and state cars and also earns huge sums every month by way of travelling allowances. Again, the dearness allowance of hundreds of pensioners has been stopped as a result of which the lives of

thousands of their dependents have become difficult. Majority of these pensioners do not get more than Rs. 20/- per month.

The present economic crisis in the State, precipitated by the continued deadlock on the accession issue and the mismanagement of the Nationalists, has hit the people hard. Deploring the present state of affairs in the State the pro-Nationalist "Martand" of Srinagar writes:—

> "The people of the State are not able to pay even controlled rates for essential commodities. The economic condition of the State has deteriorated. The Government would not oblige the people if it tried to help them out of the crisis instead of spending money on unnecessary items. But we see that the Government is acting in a manner which is bound to worsen the economic position of the State ..... But we warn the Government that when one transcends the limits of patience one has no course left but not to rely on the Government and to speed up its end"-

Abdul Gani Trali, a prominent leader of the National Conference from Pulwama, in the course of a statement about the conditions in his district, says:—

> "The conditions in the interior of the district are alarming. Black market is widespread and the people are suffering untold hardships. They have almost nothing

> to eat. The government should atonce move in the matter and relieve them of the present agony".

There is no denying the fact that the Nationalists have introduced certain half hearted and illconceived reforms about the proprietor-ship of land and liquidation of rural indebtedness. When compared with what little has been done in this behalf in India or Pakistan no one can minimise the importance of this step. But two things need be kept in view while estimating the value of the reforms. Firstly, it must be recognised that the reforms have been introduced with a political motive and not primarily to benefit the wretched peasantry. The reforms have, therefore, not been implemented in the way as to increase the prosperity of the tillers of the soil. A. K. Ghosh, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, was perfectly justified in observing in a meeting at Cuttack that the "present agrarian reforms in Kashmir were good only on paper".

As regards the Law to liquidate rural indebtedness it is interesting to know what the official organ of the National Conference the 'Khidmat' wrote in one of its latest issues dated the 21st December 1951. It said :—

> "A new problem has arisen with the promulgation of this Law. At the time when a peasant has to purchase seed, bull, agricultural implements, or such other things he is unable to find money. If an artisan needs some money where can he get it ? The

> capitalist and usurer no longer help him, because they feel aggrieved on account of the new Law and rightly or wrongly complain against the dishonesty of the debtors. Therefore ordinarily it can not be expected that they will lend money to peasants and artisans".

The Jammu National Conference has recently adopted a resolution stating how new crafty methods have been devised by the usurers to enslave the poorer classes. It has been revealed that needy peasants and workers are made to sign documents holding them responsible for double the amounts than are actually lent to them and this is done in presence of magistrates. The official organ of the National Conference has confirmed the report as correct. Thus the story that the Abdullah Government has conferred a big boon on the working classes by passing this Law is unfounded. The fact is that it has added to the miseries of the pauperised masses.

Besides, the peasants and others know well that despite grant of lands their economic condition has grown worse than it was in the previous regimes owing to the exhorbitant prices of all consumer goods. The taxes they have to pay to the State have increased. The annihilation of civil liberties have also made them resentful together with other classes of the people. For these reasons the Muslim masses of peasants refuse to support the Nationalist Government and are attracted by the Pakistan slogan as they used to be before the reforms were introduced.

COUNTRYWIDE UNHAPPINESS.

As a strong reaction to these unspeakable hardships and untold miseries people look with wistful eyes upon the bygone days. Not only the Hindus whose desire to get the unwanted and alien Dogra Rule restored and whose preference for Hindu autocracy over Muslim government, however benevolent, is understandable, but even many Muslims have begun to evince some sort of admiration for the Maharaja and all signs standing for the old regime. A mixed crowd of Hindus and Muslims raised slogans eulogizing Yuvraj Karan Singh and condemning the Nationalists when the Yuvraj paid a surprise visit to Rambag Temple soon after he took up as the Regent of the State. Naturally Abdullah resented this and approached his Congress patrons to ban such "activities" of the Yuvraj.

In Kashmir today no body feels happy. Muslims are unhappy because, barring a few hundred Nationalist workers who are wielding authority, they have been deprived of all civil liberties and even the small freedom they had achieved after years of struggle from the Dogra rulers has been snatched away from them. Besides, they are now virtually prisoners in their own land because owing to the post-partition psychology they cannot easily move outside the boundaries of the valley in India as they used to do; they cannot go to Pakistan so long as the Kashmir dispute lasts.

The Kashmiri Pandits are unhappy because,

though the most educated community in the State, they are pushed aside and discouraged and bullied in all walks of life. Paradoxically their efficiency has become the cause of their misfortune and maltreatment. More than twenty thousand Pandits have left the State to settle in the plains of India.

The Dogras are sad because their age old sentiments are being wantonly and unceremoniously trampled upon by the upstart Nationalists.

Above all, the prevailing insecurity and the uncertainty about the future are adding to the unhappiness. Hindus are uncertain that the State can long remain with India by the force of arms as at present. They are afraid that sooner or later it is bound to accede to Pakistan not so much as a result of the efforts of the U. N. Security Council as due to the internal developments in the body politic of the country. Muslims are not quite sure that the State will easily go to Pakistan as the heart-breaking delay in the settlement of the issue and the repeated failures of the U. N. Commissioners have inspired little faith in them that anything will be decided in the near future. This suspense has woefully told upon the economic, social and cultural life of the people.

During the last four years construction work of every kind has almost come to a standstill in all parts of the country. Compared with what was done previously very few houses are being built now. Nothing is done to improve agriculture by private means; no new orchards are being laid. No one is

prepared to invest any big money in business of any kind. As a matter of fact the capital already invested is being slowly withdrawn particularly by the Hlndu businessmen. Small bankers have stopped all transactions with disastrous results for the poorer classes of the population.

CHAPTER VI

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Nationalist Government's move to convoke a Constituent Assembly in the State has apparently succeeded but only apparently. After all the opposition parties in the State had boycotted elections to the Assembly, the National Conference, the party in power, was able to capture all the 75 seats without any contest. The first meeting of the Assembly was held at Srinagar on 30th of October 1951. According to the statements of the Nationalist leaders, the Assembly, besides framing a constitution for the State, will take decisions on such matters as (i) the ratification of the resolution to accede to India (ii) future status of the Ruler and (iii) the determination of the amount of compensation to be paid to the land lords affected by the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act.

The people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir took no interest, whatsoever, in the setting up of the Assembly. That has been amply evidenced by the fact that all the main opposition parties of the State, namely the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Democratic Union, The Kashmir Socialist Party, the Muslim Conference, the Akali Dal and the Praja Parishad boycotted elections to the Assembly.

The working committees of the Jammu and Kashmir Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party and the Kashmir Democratic Union, in a joint resolution adopted on November 3, 1951 said:—

> "The first chapter of a big farce of the convening of the so-called Constituent Assembly by the Maharaja's Government in Kashmir has ended. The elections are practically over in all parts of the Indian-occupied areas of the State. From what has happened it can now be stated with certainty that no party and no person other than the notorious National Conference and its leaders have taken part in this drama, The People of Kashmir have unitedly boycotted the fraudulent move and given a conclusive proof that they had nothing to do with these elections and those elected do not represent them in any way".

The Praja Parishad also passed a similar resolution, It said:—

> "The so-called Assembly did not in any way represent the people of Jammu and they would not be bound by what decisions it would take."

The attitude of the Muslim Conference as represented by the Pakistan and Azad Kashmir Governments is well known. They consider the convening of the Assembly as a violation of the international agreement between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

As far as the Sikhs of the State are concerned, their representative organisation, the Akali Dal, also boycotted the elections to the Assembly.

The Kashmiri Pandits were no less emphatic in declaring that the Assembly was merely a gathering of the Nationalists and their "Yes men". The daily "Martand", official organ of the All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference, writing editorially said, that "any decision of the Assembly would be considered unilateral as the members of the Assembly, all of whom happen to be Nationalists, were bound to follow the dictates of their leaders and not represent the people of Kashmir."

How the farce of the election to the Assembly was held among the Nationalists themselves, the following extract from a letter addressed to the National Conference High Command by its Jammu branch may be read with interest:—

> "The two women members from Jammu, namely Mrs. Mani and Mrs. Ram Dayi (widow of late Brigadier Rajendra Singh) were not the members of the Jammu National Conference. The election board gave them tickets for election but they were not recommended by the Conference. They were nominated from above and declared elected. The panel of candidates submitted by Jammu National Confreence did not include these two women members".

Unsurprisingly all free and democratic nations of the world repudiated the move of the Constituent Assembly as undemocratic and provocative.

CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION

The people of Kashmir have repeatedly declared that nothing short of a free and impartial plebiscite, conducted and supervised by the United Nations, would satisfy them. They consider it the only fair solution of the accession issue. They are determined to secure for themselves the right of deciding their fate themselves freely and without any pressure or coercion. As such they unhesitatingly declared their decision to boycott elections to the Assembly. The fact that the Nationalist Goverment was itself a party to the dispute of accession and that this Government had, during past four years of its rule. deprived the people of their legitimate rights and freedom and had spared no pains to tyrannise them, had convinced the people beyond any shadow of doubt that the elections to the Constituent Assembly could neverbe fair and impartial. Following the active lead given by the parties like the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party, the Kashmir Democratic Union, the Muslim Conference, the Akali Dal and the Praja Parishad, the people of the State decided to boycott the elections. Their fears and apprehensions which were held in derision by the Nationalists, turned out to be genuine and the manner in which the Nationalist Government tried to influence elections in the Jammu Province, where Praja Parishad had earlier decided to fight, furnished ample proof of the fact that the elections could never be fair.

The outside world appears to be ignorant of the campaign of ruthless persecution of political oppo-

nents in the State by the Nationalist authorities which was, significantly enough, intensified just before the elections to the Constituent Assembly so that no body could dare oppose it and which led to the boycott decision of the people.

Hundreds of prominent leaders and workcrs of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, the Kashmir Socialist Party, the Kashmir Democratic Union, the Muslim Conference and the Praja Parishad were imprisoned. They included Noor Mohammed, General Secretary of the Kashmir Socialist Party, Sham Lal Yechha, Secretary of the Kashmir Democratie Union, Mohammed Sikandar Malik, General Secretary of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference, Kh. Habib Shah, Mr. Ghulam Qadir Bhat, Mr. Abdul Rahim, Kh. Jalal-ud-Din, prominent workers of the Muslim Conference and Thakur Rugh Nath Singh and Mr. Makhan Lal, leaders of the Praja Parishad. There was no question of granting any freedom of expression of views or holding of any demonstrations by political parties in opposition to the Nationalists. Only the Nationalists had the freedom to address public meetings and take out processions.

Entire Government machinery was mobilised to convass support for the National Conference candidates, government officers, professors, teachers clerks, doctors and students were directed to induce people to vote for the National Conference. The workers of the National Conference were given perfect liberty to intimidate and coerce people into submission

and to force them to vote for the National Conference. People were threatened with cancellation of their ration cards if they did not vote as directed,

Prominent and responsible leaders of the National Conference such as Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Mirza Afzal Beg and Maulvi Syeed publicly stated that no power on earth could undo the decision of the National Conference to accede to India. Any body who dared to criticise the assertion was declared enemy of the State.

In Kashmir, following the decision of all parties to boycott elections to the Assembly, only two independent candidates, Sardar Sant Singh "Teg" and Pt. Shiv Narayan Fotedar, both devoted followers of Sheikh Abdullah and and his Nationalism, decided to take part in the elections. But they were also forced to withdraw and boycott,

Sardar Sant Singh "Teg", in his letter of September 21, 1951 to the Returning Officer of Baramulla protesting against official interference in the elections, said:—

"On 8th of September it was decided that the colour of my ballot box will be green and that of my rival, Sardar Harbans Singh, red. The decision was ultimately modified in my absence and I was informed of the same at a time when it was impossible for me to communicate the same to the voters".

"I regret to say that I was even deprived of all facilities to acquaint the electorate with my views, policy and pro-

gramme. Also, whereever and whenever I decided to hold an election meeting so that I could convass suport for myself, all foul and disgraceful methods were employed to prevent voters from attending such meetings.

"Besides, the workers of the National Conference, the Revenue Minister, the Administrative Officer of Baramulla and other high ranking government officers used all possible and unfair methods to intimidate my voters and told them that a vote cast in my favour would be considered a vote cast in favour of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali and Zafar Ullah Khan. They were also threatened that if they voted in my favour severe action would be taken against them. In view of these speeches and propaganda I have been convinced that the people will not be able to make a free and fair use of their votes. I have, therefore, decided to lodge a protest with you and to inform you of my decision to boycott the election."

In order to render the boycort move of the people ineffective, Sheikh Abdullah publicly stated, at a meeting in Srinagar, that "people would not be allowed to boycott and a legislation would be enacted empowering the Government to punish those who would refuse to vote." This challenge was accepted by all fighters for freedom. People decided not to visit the polling booths on the election day, come what may. Abdullah must have subsequently realised the absurdity and the ridiculousness of his fulmination as he dared not pass the proposed legislation. He must also have anticipated the result.

The tactics employed by the Nationalists to silence opposition in the Kashmir Valley were repeated with alterations where necessary in the Jammu province where the Praja Parishad had in the begin-

ning decided to take part in the contest. The Parishad had decided to contest all the 30 seats but soon truth dawned upon it that it could not do so successfully as the Nationalist government was bent upon using all fair and foul means to secure all the seats for the Nationalists.

The steps taken by the Nationalist Government to supress rival party in the Jammu Province were discussed by Pt. Prem Nath Dogra, President of the Praja Parishad, in the course of an address to a Press Conference at New Delhi in the first week of October, 1951. The Parishad Chief said:—

> "The government which is another name of the National Conference, is employing all fair and foul methods to see that real representatives of the people are not elected to the Assembly. It is because of this policy of the government that no body in the Kashmir Provice dared to stand as a candidate in any of the 45 seats. The two independent candidates were forced to withdraw."

> "The Parishad had set up 65 candidates for 27 seats. Out of these, the nomination papers of as many as 41 Parishad candidates were rejected on flimsy and absurd grounds. As against this, the nomination

> papers of not even a single National Conference nominee were rejected although Parishad had raised serious objections against some of them. ... ... To add insult to injury, the entire administrative machinery of the Nationalist government was mobilised to spread venomous things against the Parishad. This was done strictly in accordance with the instructions of the Deputy Prime Minister (Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed) of the State. He himself toured the Province and personally threatened the people not to support the Parishad. Similarly the Deputy Commissioner of Kathua and Tehsildar and Naib Tehsildar of Ramban openly indulged in pro-National Conference and Anti-Parishad propaganda".

The allegations and accusations brought forth by the Parishad Chief were corraborated by the weekly "Chand", a pro-National Conference journal of Jammu. The Paper in an editorial wrote:—

> "The nomination papers of 40 of the Parishad candidates were rejected according to a well planned scheme. The matter becomes suspicious when we find that none of the National Conference candidates was disqualified".

The Nationalist government did not stop here. In order to malign the Parishad and to lower them

in the eyes of the Jammu Hindus, the Cabinet Ministers and the Nationalist leaders and their Press dubbed them agents of Pakistan on the ground that any criticism of or opposition to the government, however legitimate and well-intentioned it may be, would strengthen the hands of Pakistan. A campaign of villification of Parishad leaders was let loose. Where necessary, the help of police was obtained to cow down the supporters of the Parishad. All these things compelled the Parishad leaders to reconsider their earlier decision of participating in the elections After a careful study of the situation the Parishad finally decided to boycott the elections.

It should not be difficult to understand the idea underlying the move to convene a Constituent Assembly in the State. It was just to raise the shattered morale of the rank and file of the National Conference and to lower down the same of the people of the State. Also, it was initiated with a view to divert the attention of the people from the fast deteriorating political and economic conditions in the State.

But the move has not, however, served the purpose. For, the circumstances under which the Assembly was set up and the disappointingly poor response it had from the people have further demoralised the Nationalists who themselves do not attach much importance to it as they themselves realise that it has no popular sanction behind it.

A look at the composition of the Assembly will appear interesting, Majority of its members already

belong to the General Council of the National Conference. Barring half a dozen well-educated members, the Assembly consists of people who are hardly literate. And it will be they who will frame the Constitution for "New Kashmir"! The talent of the Nation will remain outside the Assembly.

CHAPTER VII

RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

The survey of the situation in parts of Kashmir on this side of the cease fire line would be incomplete if no mention is made of the popular resistance movement in the Kashmir Valley which is assuming larger proportions with the passage of time and about which almost nothig is heard in the Indian Press. The Movement is the direct outcome of the people's determination tc end the present totalitarian, anti-democratic and despotic rule. It has already taken deep roots in the soil.

Hundreds of resistance pickets have been established in various parts of the State from Teethwal to Bhadarwah and from Kargil to Rajouri. It is surprising to know the manner in which these pickets have been organised. One is impressed to find the organisers of these pickets atonce violent and peace loving. Crusaders for peace as they are generally known in Kashmir, they do not hesitate to state plainly that they would not refrain from taking up arms against the present Maharaja's Government if contitutional methods are long denied and if that became necessary in the interests of peace and freedom of their mother country.

These resistance pickets remind one of the days when during the second world war the freedom loving

people of Europe and the East organised underground resistance movements against Nazism of Hitler, Fascism of Mussolini and Militarism of Japan. The pickets are run efficiently and are supervised by men of high intellectual calibre. The organisers are always on the move and devote full time and energy on making the resistance movement wider and stronger. They are absolutely non-communal and are much enthusiastic about their job. They aim at the overthrow of the present unpopular Government of the State and creation of favourable conditions for a Democratic set up. Some of the men connected with the movement appear to be confident that they would undoubtedly succeed where the Security Council had failed. In all parts of the State people are helping the Resisters in every possible manner.

The emergence of a popular Resistance Movement in the State has extremely perturbed the Abdulla Government. But so far all its efforts to suppress the Movement have totally failed. The entire force of the Nationalists and police personnel has been alerted and ordered to remain vigilent. The guards posted at the bridges and the Government offices have been reinforced. Similarly the strength of the personal body guards of the Nationalist Ministers have been increased and stalwart Sikhs (this is significant) have been appointed to guard their persons and their residences.

All this would prove of no avail but for the presence of the huge Indian army which in the last

resort is the real defender of the unpopular Abdullah regime. Let no one lull himself into belief that the Indian bayonets can maintain peace in the State for a long time. That complacency would be dangerous.

The atmosphere in the State is surcharged with tension and a violent outburst might be expected any moment. To say that the situation is calm and the people are behind the Nationalist Government is to shut eyes to realities. Even the paid Muslim volunteers of the Nationalists are not with the Government.

It will also be recalled that a number of Muslims were arrested in different parts of Kashmir Valley following a report in 1949 that large stocks of arms, ammunition and bombs had been secretely dumped in various places and there was a plan to violently over throw the Nationalist Government. The police raided a number of places in Srinagar and elsewhere and recovered large stocks of bombs and ammunition. The arrested persons were tried in a Court and they were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Some of them are still in jail in Srinagar The incident ultimately came to be known as the Bomb case.

In short, the situation in the State is fraught with dangerous consequences. It is bound to burst like a volcanoe at any moment bringing within its orbit the entire sub-continent if steps are not immediately taken to improve it and settle the Kashmir dispute peacefully to the satisfaction of all the classes, sections and parties keeping in view the high principles of Democracy and Humanism. It would be a great tragedy if violence breaks out on a big scale.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIA AND KASHMIR

The people in India, whose knowledge about Kashmir politics is confined to the reports sent by the biassed and partisan correspondents of the Congress journals, believe that the leaders and the workers of the National Conference are without any doubt non-communal and the present Nationalist Government is secular and progressive in the truest sense of the term. But so far as facts go there is nothing like that. Whatever the Congress Press might say about the doings of the Kashmir Government and despite the specious pronouncements of the Nationalist leaders it is well known inside the State that Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues are no less communalists than the Muslim Conferencites. Indeed afraid of the taunts and gibes of the Pakistan and Azad Kashmir Radios and in order to prove that they are greater defenders of the Faith than their rivals, the Muslim leaders of the National Conference have been acting in ways highly objectionable from secular point of view. At times the legitimate interests of Hindus have been sacrificed to placate the displeased and disgruntled Muslims in a manner as no Muslim espousing League ideology would have conscientiously done.

One of the devices adopted by Sheikh Abdullah to regain popularity among the Muslims has been to

behave like a rabid and rank communalist and do what those he professes to fight against are doing. Many instances can be put forth to support this statement.

The Udhampur district of the Jammu Province was composed of two parts. In its North and Eastern tehsils the majority of population was Muslim and in the remaining parts the majority was of Hindus. On the whole Hindus were in majority in the district. Abdullah Government partitioned the district on religious basis forming it into two, thereby creating a new Muslim district of Doda in the North adjacent to the Valley of Kashmir. In view of this Sheikh Abdullah's persistent opposition to the partition of India even after it is a settled fact and his staunch antagonism to the two nation theory is meaningless and sheer hypocricy.

Again, during the past four years the Nationalist Government has externed from the State hundreds of political leaders and workers who refused to agree with Sheikh Abdullah's politics. The externees belonged to different political creeds but in all cases the Muslim political workers were sent to Pakistan and Hindus to India. This course was adopted even in case of the Socialist and other non-communal workers. The president of the Kisan Mazdoor Conference who is a Muslim but does not believe in the two nation theory was forced to go to Pakistan. Little wonder that the Kashmir Muslims belive that Pakistan is the refuge of persecuted Muslims and

India a country where only Hindus in distress can find asylum.

Yet, again, as a result of the big upheavals in November 1947, thousands of Hindus and Sikhs in the territories now forming Azad Kashmir were forced to leave their homes and seek shelter on this side of the cease fire line. Being born in the Kashmir Province or the areas where climatic and other conditions are similar to that of the valley the refugees have been clamouring that they may be settled on the Government or Maharaja's lands in the valley. Once a promise was held out to them that they will be settled in Mansbal area of Baramulla district. Sheikh Abdullah has persistently refused to do so due to fear of displeasing Muslims. The refugees continue to be homeless and have been ordered to be settled in Hindu areas of the Jammu Province.

Such instances can be multiplied but probably these will suffice. What does all this signify? Spiritually and mentally Sheikh Abdulla and his colleagues have surrendered before the advocates of the two nation theory. They are deceiving Indians by loudly proclaiming that the fight in Kashmir is between the forces of secularism one the one side and communalism on the other. But the truth is that it is Sheikh Abdullah and his few colleagues fighting their game of personal power. They are only cleverly, though also dishonestly, taking ill-advantage of the deep sentiments of the secular minded Hindus in India. It is unwise of India that these self seekers should be allowed to do so.

Abdullah has two voices one for the Muslims in Kashmir and the other for Hindus in India. Before his Kashmiri brethren he wants to prove himself as champion of Islamic culture and faith. It is little known outside that his main platform is the famous mosque, Durgah Shariff on the bank of Dal Lake from where his important political pronouncements are made. When he descends to the plains the Sheikh is at great pains to show thar he is leftist and secularist *par excellence.*

No one in Kashmir is deceived by this double faced politician but many in India forming their views on the basis of the material supplied to them by the Congress leaders and the Congress Press cherish attractive illusions about the Nationalists. Sheikh Abdullah's mental hand bag has been aptly described by a great writer as an amalgam of nationalist, communalist and socialist ideologies. Any Person or Party espousing any ideology—Nationalist, Communalist, Socialist or Communist—can have Sheikh Abdullah on its side provided it can maintain him in position of power. That fact fully explains Sheikh's present adherence to Congress and Nehru. Had Abdullah any firm hope that he would get a high and responsible position of power in Kashmir under Pakistan he should have long been on the other side of the cease fire line. He tried his level best to secure this assurance through envoys but failed. His vain utterances before Indian audiances that Pakistan is anxious to get him on her side and that she spent fabulous amounts to kidnap him are nothing but sour grapeism.

INDIA'S AIMS IN KASHMIR

If we question any Indian as regards the aims of the occupation of Kashmir against the will of the State people only two replies are frequently vouchsafed. We are either told that India is fighting for the cause of Democracy and Secularism by unstintedly supporting the National Conference or it is said that the Kashmir Hindus and their culture have to be protected who will otherwise suffer the same fate as the Hindus of the West Punjab. If the Indians want to live in a fool's paradise by reposing their faith in the reports of the Congress journals which daily assert that both these aims are being fully achieved, no one can help them. But if they do not want to get shockingly disillusioned at the proper time they better learn the truth now. And the truth is that neither of the purposes set before them are being attained by the occupation of the country. It is a myth that the Kashmir Nationalists are non-communal or that their government is secular or progressive in character. Absolute denial of all human rights to and brutal suppression of the Kashmiris is enough to prove this. It is equally a vain hope to believe that the Kashmir Hindus are living peacefully and contentedly under the Nationalist rule. Tens of thousands of Kashmiri Pandits, unable to stand the vagaries of the Nationalists have left the valley and if there is no change in the administration for the better in the near future, out of the residue, many others, who can, will also come down to the plains of India. If the Dogra Hindus still stick to their place of birth and do not

resort to large scale exodus it is because they have a flickering hope that the proposed plebiscite will be held region-wise affording them an opportunity to join India permanently.

The Dogras know well and firmly believe that as a result of the impending plebiscite the valley is bound to accede to Pakistan which will automatically end the much hated and unwanted Nationalist rule. Then they hope to heave a sigh of relief.

By maintaining huge armies in Kashmir, the Government of India is not only impoverishing their own country by this enormous wasteful expenditure; they are also making all sections of the State people very unhappy and miserable. It is a crime against man and against humanity. The sooner the occupation ends the better for all.

The people of Kashmir either support the Nationalists in the accession issue or oppose them. Sheikh Abdullah has repeated, more than a hundred times during the past four years, that so long as one Kashmiri is alive he will not allow his motherland to join Pakistan. If that is true and not stated merely to please Indians why all this ado about nothing? Let him prove it in a fair and impartial plebiscite. Why does he want Indian bayonets to support him during plebiscite period? If on the contrary the large majority of the State" people especially the Muslims support Pakistan as the constant filibustering by Abdullah of U. N. nego-

tions to settle the dispute prove, then it is obvious the Nationalists are cheating India and harming the 450 million people of the sub-continent. How long will India pay Abdullah for his villification of Pakistan ? How long will wishful thinkers give their credulous ear to the fantastic tales of the Nationalist gang eulogising their own wonderful adventures ? How long will India and Pakistan remain at logger heads because of Abdullah and his Forty associates ? The best interests of the people of the sub-continent demand that there should exist the friendliest relations between the two countries.

If there is any truth in the moral precept that "end does not justify means" what India is doing is highly immoral. Even if by suppressing the people of Kashmir a secular State can be established, which is impossible on the very face of it, no moral person can conscientiously support it. It is indeed tragic that the followers of Mahatma Gandhi, the great teacher of the twin principle of Truth and Non-violence and the standard bearer of politics on the basis of morality, should uphold the military occupation of peace loving Kashmir. No sensible person can believe that any nation or community can become secular by brute force. This is not saying that Kashmiris are communal minded or religion ridden. There is a chance for Secularism to grow in the valley as these pages are aimed to show. But the real Secularism based on the principles of Humanism and not sentimentalism, can emanate from other than

Nationalist sources. Far sighted Indians need support such elements. They can rise only when the foreign armies are with-drawn, iron curtain is smashed and people are free to express themselves and shape their own destiny uninterfered. At present the policy of the Indian government is smothering these very Humanist elements by giving unqualified support to the totalitarianism and barbarism of the Nationalists.